

JOURNAL OF THE MISSISSIPPI BAPTIST CONVENTION SINCE 1877

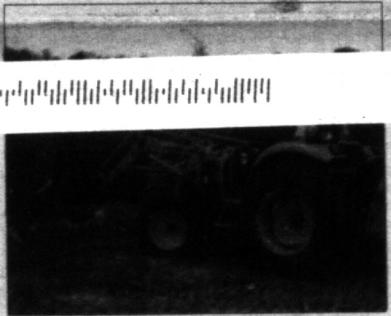
## Miss. Baptists provide disaster relief



**WORKING THE CHAINSAWS** — John Henry (back, left), member of Briar Hill Church, Florence, and coordinator of the Mississippi Baptist Disaster Relief Task Force chainsaw teams in Oklahoma, meets with Mississippi Baptist disaster relief workers from Covington-Jeff Davis Association and some of the Oklahoma storm victims they were assisting with heavy debris cleanup. (Photo courtesy of David Baldwin)

**HEAVY DEBRIS REMOVAL** — Mississippi Baptist Disaster Relief Task Force volunteers remove heavy debris from the massive tornado in Shawnee, Ok.

(Photo courtesy of David Baldwin)  
**(FAR RIGHT) WHY THEY DO IT** — A cross carved from the trunk of a heavily-damaged tree outside Shawnee, Ok., symbolically marks the area where Mississippi Baptist Disaster Relief Task Force volunteers have been working to help storm victims. (Photo by David Baldwin)



## Volunteers complete Oklahoma response, continue to Missouri

By William H. Perkins Jr.  
Editor

Mississippi Baptist Disaster Relief Task Force volunteers are wrapping up their assignments in tornado-ravaged Oklahoma and making plans to tackle similar storm damage in the St. Louis, Mo., area.

Jim Didlake, director of Men's Ministry at the Mississippi Baptist Convention Board in Jackson and coordinator of the Mississippi Baptist Disaster Relief Task Force, reported that one team of Mississippi Baptist volunteers remains in the Shawnee, Ok., area — a chainsaw and heavy debris removal team from Covington-Jeff Davis Association.

Didlake estimated that about 30 Mississippi Baptists have cycled through the Oklahoma disaster response since severe weather spawned powerful tornadoes in the Shawnee area on May 19 and the Moore area on May 20. "The last Mississippi team will work through June 7," he said.

Mississippi Baptist volunteers in Oklahoma were assigned two tasks. Donna Swarts, a member of Goodwater Church, Magee, headed

up the Incident Command Team, while John Henry, a member of Briar Hill Church, Florence, coordinated heavy debris removal and chainsaw teams.

Didlake said the task force's mass feeding unit, a fully self-contained eighteen-wheeler capable of preparing thousands of hot meals per day, was not activated because Baptist disaster relief units from Oklahoma and surrounding states were meeting those needs.

Wes White, pastor of Smithville Church in Monroe Association, and a contingent from the church will soon be traveling to Oklahoma to distribute gift cards to storm victims so basic needs in the devastated areas can be met, Didlake said. Smithville Church and the town of Smithville were destroyed by an EF5 tornado on April 27, 2011.

Mississippi Baptist Disaster Relief Task Force volunteers will soon be in the St. Louis area in response to a violent May 31 storm front that produced at least three large tornadoes — some with tracks as long as 40-50 miles. Didlake said the Task Force is assembling three teams of at least

see RELIEF on p. 6

## Calvinism Advisory Committee releases report

**NASHVILLE (BP and local reports)** — A 19-member advisory committee on Calvinism that included a Mississippi pastor has issued its report to Southern Baptist Convention (SBC) Executive Committee President Frank Page, acknowledging tension and disagreement within the denomination on the issue while urging Southern Baptists to "grant one another liberty" and "stand together" for the Great Commission.

Eric Hankins, senior pastor of First Church, Oxford, and a member of the committee, said, "I am excited and



HANKINS

honored to present Southern Baptists with a consensus statement driven by the things we hold so dear: the Word, the Spirit, mission, cooperation, and freedom. I believe it effectively articulates and models the way forward, taking seriously both our theological unity and diversity as a truly positive component of our one sacred effort."

"We can talk like brothers and sisters in Christ, and we can work urgently and eagerly together," the 3,200-word report reads. "We have learned that we can have just this kind of conversation together, and we invite

all Southern Baptists to join together in this worthy spirit of conversation. But let us not neglect the task we are assigned. The world desperately needs to hear the promise of the Gospel."

The advisory team — not an official committee of the convention — was assembled by Page in August 2012 to advise him on developing a strategy whereby people of various theological persuasions can purposely work together in missions and evangelism."

The committee was composed of Calvinists and non-Calvinists from different walks of life in the convention. The report lists areas of theological agreement and acknowledges differences between the two camps, say-

ing "we do indeed have some challenging but not insurmountable points of tension."

The committee says its goal was to "speak truthfully, honestly, and respectfully" about the issue, and that disagreements over Calvinism should not "threaten our Great Commission cooperation."

"We affirm that Southern Baptists stand together in a commitment to cooperate in Great Commission ministries," the report says. "We affirm that, from the very beginning of our denominational life, Calvinists and non-Calvinists have cooperated together. We affirm that these differences should not threaten our eager

see CALVINISM on p. 6

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# From the editor

WILLIAM PERKINS

## Nothing to do with fireworks

**A**re you ready for "Bang with Friends?" No, we're not talking here about sharing a July 4 fireworks celebration with close acquaintances. Not at all.

FoxNews reports three enterprising college students have rolled out a new web site featuring a software interface that allows users to select the Facebook friends with whom they would like to have sex. "If the feeling is mutual," FoxNews says, "both parties receive an email message to establish a rendezvous. The website also features a 'bangability' score, which measures your trending sexiness based on the number of people who view and click on you."

The article does not identify the college students nor the school they attend.

According to the FoxNews report, Bang With Friends has only been around for four months but already counts more than 900,000 members. The web site claims to have facilitated over 200,000 sexual connections. About 70% of members are between the ages of 18 and 35, FoxNews says.

The casual manner in which the Bang with Friends web site describes its true purpose as reflected in the site's suggestive language and even its slogan — none of which is appropriate for a family newspaper such as The Baptist Record — is another sad and troubling reflection of the decline of sexual morality in our country.

Oh, yes, almost forgot to mention the web site offers the software in both Apple and Android formats. Wouldn't want to leave anyone out.

It seems downright quaint to even ask, but what happened to the Bible-based concept that sexual relations are reserved for one man and one woman, chaste before marriage and monogamous after marriage, for life? It seems that venerable idea was thrown on the ash heap of history a long time ago, doesn't it?

Inarguably, we've paid painfully high social and cultural prices for intentionally abandoning God's sexual ideal for us. Bang with Friends is just one example.

"This cheapens the idea of what

relationships should be about," well-known New York City psychologist and television personality Jeff Gardere warns in the FoxNews article. "It eliminates some of the things that should lead to sex, like emotional and physical connections and trust."

I fear this could lead to sexual addictions and may skew the idea of what sex and sexuality is about in young people if they don't have the proper influences in their lives."

Shanae Hall, a Los Angeles-based author and relationship expert, tells FoxNews, "The saddest part about these 'come get it' websites is that it sends the message to our young girls that it's okay to give yourself away for free to someone that could care less about you or your well-being."

Those concerns, well-founded as they are, don't begin to cover the heartache that the so-called Sexual Revolution has visited on America. Sexually-transmitted diseases, brought on largely by having unprotected sex with multiple strangers who themselves have had unprotected sex with multiple strangers, is rampant among teenagers and young adults.

Many of those infections are now drug-resistant, and public health experts tell us that it won't be long before some sexually transmitted diseases will once again be incurable and terminal.

All of this was highly preventable. Long before Bang with Friends was all the newest rave, we could have kept our focus on God and His ideal for us, and fought harder in the larger society for what we knew to be right.

Sadly, we didn't fight hard enough, and some of us have even jumped in to test the water ourselves. Now we're in the crosshairs and being called hypocrites, misogynists, and homophobes. Who would have thought it would go this far when we first averted our eyes from the sexual sin occurring all around us?

It's time to pray that God, through His extraordinary power and His extraordinary people, will turn us around and place the country on the right path for the future. He is our only hope, and always has been.

## Prayers for VBS



**Guest opinion**  
with Jerry Wooley

Over the next eight weeks, 25,000 Southern Baptist churches will be opening their doors to their communities and inviting thousands of unchurched families — spiritual orphans — to experience the Gospel through the time-tested ministry of Vacation Bible School (VBS).

Churches will collectively enroll three million kids, students, and adults during this short time, for an average of 120 people per church. This is an amazing number in itself, but a closer look at the statistics reveals even more exciting news that should call each of us to prayer every time we see a sign or banner announcing a VBS.

History tells us that 10% of everyone attending VBS this summer will be unchurched. This is a staggering 300,000 individuals and does not include the child who puts his grandmother's church name on the registration card but in reality doesn't attend except for Mother's Day, nor does 300,000 tell the complete story of the actual number represented by these unchurched kids.

Think about it for a moment. Most of these 300,000 individuals are kids. To this number we must add parents, younger and older siblings, and possibly a grandparent or two who also live in the home. When everyone is factored in, we estimate that 1,050,000 unchurched individuals will be identified this summer.

The average VBS of 120 (which includes both kids and workers) will result in 12 unchurched individuals actually attending VBS and an additional 30 unchurched family members at home.

Another statistic that should call all of us to prayer is the number of professions of faith recorded as a result of VBS. Again, based on history, there will be 80,000 professions of faith made during the weeks of VBS alone. This does not account for the thousands of people who are exposed to the Gospel during VBS and make a profession of faith during the following weeks, or the thousands of family members who make professions of faith as a result of follow-up contacts at the homes of children attending VBS.

As you drive by a church displaying a VBS banner, take time to thank God for the congregation's willingness to listen to God's whisper to reach out to the spiritual orphans of the community. Ask God to give every worker a driving desire to clearly share the Gospel message with every kid, teenager and adult who attends.

The number one issue most VBS leaders

express is the need for more workers. Pray that God will provide workers for the harvest. Ask God how you personally might respond to the need for workers not only in your own church, but the church down the street.

Pray that workers will understand that their greatest contribution to VBS will not be how well they present a Bible story, sing a song, or make a snack, but how well they build relationships with the kids, teens, and adults attending VBS.

Pray that VBS leaders will see that the true evangelistic potential of VBS is not just the week of VBS but the weeks that follow as relationships are built through continued connections. Ask God to give VBS leaders a vision for intentional follow-up that goes beyond a "thanks for attending" postcard.

Thank God for the 1,050,000 unchurched individuals. Ask God to give congregations the ability to see the unchurched families participating in VBS as a precious gift that must be cherished and cared for not only during the week of VBS but every day and week afterwards. Thank God for 80,000 professions of faith that will be made during VBS. Ask Him to help church leaders disciple these new believers well, that they in turn will be used by God to transform the world.

Thank God for 2,200 individuals who will publicly accept a call to vocational ministry as a result of participating in VBS. Thank Him for millions of people around the world who will be impacted by the lives and ministries of these individuals giving themselves to full-time service.

VBS doesn't just happen. It requires enormous work and resources, but most of all it requires enormous prayer. The results are worth it!

**Wooley** is VBS ministry specialist with LifeWay Christian Resources of the Southern Baptist Convention in Nashville. His commentary appears here courtesy of Baptist Press.

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# Survey: natural disasters bring people closer to God

**NASHVILLE (BP)** — When natural disasters occur, most Americans take increased interest in God and donate to relief agencies — and they trust faith-based agencies more than their secular counterparts. A third also believe prayer can avert natural disasters.

Those are among the findings of a LifeWay Research survey conducted days after an historic EF5 tornado devastated parts of Oklahoma May 20, killing two dozen people and causing billions of dollars in damages.

According to the study, commissioned by LifeWay's Bible Studies for Life curriculum, a third of Americans increase their trust in God during times of suffering. In response to the question, "How do you feel about God when suffering occurs that appears unfair?" the most common response is, I trust God more (33%). Other responses include:

- I am confused about God. (25%)
- I don't think about God in these situations. (16%)
- I wonder if God cares. (11%)
- I doubt God exists (seven percent)
- I am angry toward God. (five percent)
- I am resentful toward God (three percent).

"Disasters, particularly natural disasters, perplex all of us," said Ed Stetzer, president of LifeWay Research. "While some call them 'acts of God,' others question why a good and loving God would do such a thing. The fact is, God does not give us all the answers, but as Christians we believe that God gives us Himself — and that is why we have faith."

"Faith is believing God when you don't have all the answers, but disasters test that faith — some people draw closer to God, some pull away."

LifeWay reported Southerners, frequent church attendees, and those without a college degree are likely to trust God more during disasters, while younger Americans are more likely to doubt God exists.

Nearly six in 10 Americans (57%) agree with the statement, "When a natural disaster occurs, my interest in God increases."

es." Thirty-one percent disagree and 12% don't know. Nearly two-thirds of respondents living in the South agree (62%), compared with just over half in the West (54%) and Northeast (51%).

Women, people with a college degree, and those who attend worship services once a week are also likely to be more interested in God during a disaster.

Despite their increased interest in God following disasters, most Americans doubt prayer can avert natural disasters. Fifty-one percent disagree that praying can avert natural disasters, with a third (32%) strongly disagreeing. Still, 34% believe prayer can avert natural disasters. Americans in the South (40%) are more likely to believe than those in the Northeast (26%) and West (28%).

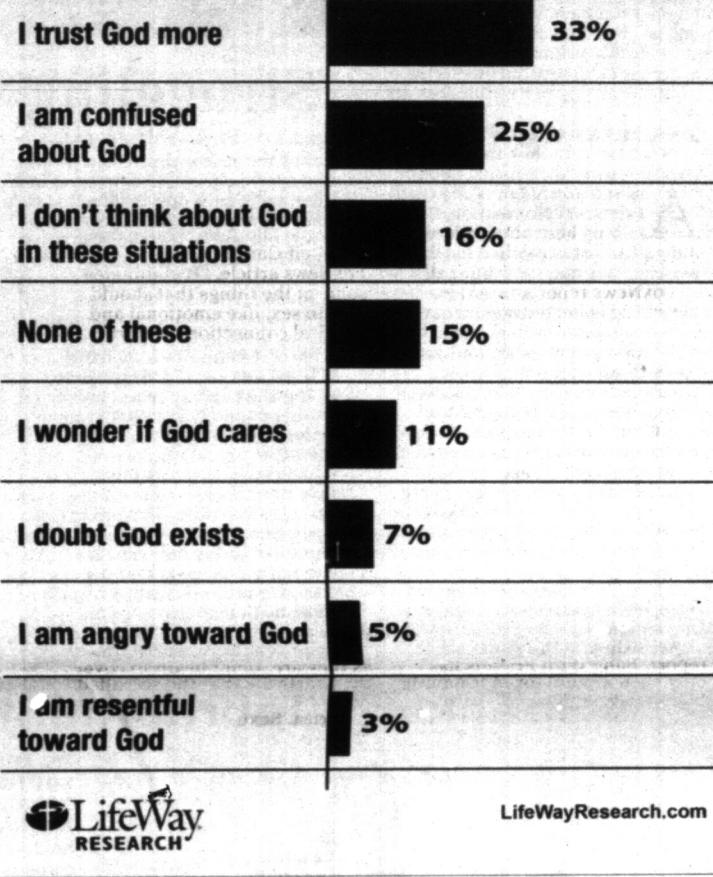
Thirty percent of Americans post on social media that they are praying for specific people or things. Sixty-seven percent do not post topics of prayer on social media and three percent don't know.

Among those who do post prayers on social media, most take a moment to actually pray rather than consider the post a form of prayer. When asked to complete the statement, "If I post a prayer on social media ...," 23% say they always take a moment to actually pray and 10% consider posting the update to be a form of prayer. Sixty-four percent complete the statement by saying they don't post prayers.

When a natural disaster occurs, Americans trust faith-based groups to be more responsible than secular groups with their donations by nearly a two to one margin. Fifty-six percent agree they trust faith-based groups more, while 28% do not. Those who live in the Midwest and South, men, and those who do not have a college degree are more likely to trust faith-based charities, while those in the Northeast and Americans ages 45-64 are not as likely.

Almost 60% of Americans donate to relief agencies in the wake of natural disasters. Thirty percent donate to both faith-based and secular relief agencies, 15% donate to faith-based relief agencies only, and 12% donate to secular relief agencies only. A third of Americans (32%) don't donate to any relief agencies.

## How do you feel about God when suffering occurs that appears unfair?



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## Records tallied in poll on homosexuality acceptance in U.S.

**"We are by nature children of wrath. It should not surprise us that not only are we predisposed to sin, we can be predisposed to specific sins. Various studies have shown a predisposition to obesity, anger, and even alcoholism, but it is important to know that predisposition does not equate to predetermination."**

**Bob Stith,  
former Southern Baptist  
national strategist for  
gender issues**

**WASHINGTON (BP)** — A record number of Americans believe homosexuality is morally acceptable and is something people are born with, according a new Gallup poll.

Fifty-nine percent of U.S. adults say gay and lesbian relations are morally acceptable while 38% say they are morally wrong, according to the poll conducted May 2-7 among 1,535 adults.

The 59% is an increase from 54% last year and 49% in 2009, when the upward trend began. The trend is a dramatic reversal from 2004, a year in which 13 states passed constitutional amendments defining marriage as between a man and a woman. That year, only 42% said such relations were morally acceptable and 54% said they were morally wrong.

On the question of homosexu-

ality's origins, 47% say "being gay or lesbian" is "something a person is born with" while 33% say it is "due to factors such as upbringing and environment." Both numbers are records.

The percentage of people who believe homosexuality is present at birth has increased or remained steady since 2009, when the upward trend began and a plurality of Americans (42%) said it was due to upbringing/environment and 35% said it was something with which people are born.

Bob Stith, former Southern Baptist national strategist for gender issues, said much of the growing acceptance of homosexuality can be blamed on the church's failure to prepare Christians "to understand and communicate God's original intent" on sexuality and "to do so in a redemptive and

compassionate manner."

"Apart from a true spiritual renewal, I do not see this trend changing," Stith told Baptist Press, referencing the Gallup data.

No scientifically accepted study has found a strictly genetic cause for homosexuality, Stith said, but he added that even if science does find such a genetic link Scripture's teachings on homosexuality will remain true.

Stith believes homosexuality is a product of "nature and nurture," and that it's a sin that can be overcome through Christ.

"I still hear Christians — including leaders — confidently state 'it's just a choice,'" Stith said. "Both science and those involved in ministry to same-sex strugglers recognize that both nature and nurture are involved. Again, we do great harm to our cause when we

make that pronouncement."

The homosexual might not choose his temptations, but he does choose whether to act on them, Stith said. "We are by nature children of wrath. It should not surprise us that not only are we predisposed to sin, we can be predisposed to specific sins. Various studies have shown a predisposition to obesity, anger, and even alcoholism, but it is important to know that predisposition does not equate to predetermination."

"While I do not believe a strictly genetic causation will be found, it should not change our understanding of or our commitment to Scripture," Stith said. "God has made clear His view of the issue. He has also promised freedom to any who will truly seek Him. Today, thousands of men and women walk in freedom from the power of same-sex attractions."

**S**uicide simply refers to self-inflicted death. It is one of life's most difficult experiences. It is difficult for family, friends and acquaintances to understand the circumstances that were so hard that they would drive the person to end their life. It is hard for us to understand why either the person could not find any answers or we were not alert enough to provide some answers. Suicide is one of the leading killers among young people, and it has become more and more prominent in the older folks among us. But there is actually no age or stage in life that is immune and, strange as it may seem, there is no intellectual or economic setting in which it does not invade.

Some years ago a high school that was not too far from the church where I was a pastor was experiencing multiple suicide deaths among their students. It was such a topic of conversation, the grief was so deep and the questions were so many that I felt compelled to address the subject. It is not a new thing that has come on the scene of our world for there are suicides that are recorded in scripture. Not the least of whom would be Saul, the first King of Israel, and Judas, one of the Lord's chosen twelve.

As I shared with our local congregation about what the Bible says about suicide, I entitled the message, Suicide the Silent Answer to Life, because there are always many more questions than answers. Sometimes a note or a letter is left or even a phone call made before action is taken, but it never answers all of the questions. Sometimes the suicide takes place after a person has committed a criminal act. After being chased and trapped in that moment of decision making and terror, they may decide that it is better to take their life than to be



With Jim Futral, executive director-treasurer  
Mississippi Baptist Convention Board

## Struggling with Suicide

taken by the authorities. Often people are so overwhelmed by some event in life or they are in such desperation that they can't see any answers, any solutions, any way out and so their answer is just to end life. I have known people who had desperate health issues, others were overwhelmed by debt, others who had experienced rejection of love and some who may have simply wanted to get attention and so they took their life.

**There are some things about suicide that are untrue.** I suppose the biggest among them is that some people think that suicide is the unpardonable sin. This view comes out of some churches whose theological perspective is based more on their own thinking rather than the Word of God. They believe that if someone were to die in the act of taking their own life there is no way that they can get forgiveness and be saved. Nothing is further from the Biblical truth than that. For the fact is that we are saved only through a relationship with Jesus Christ who died for

us. When you trust Him, you are saved and nothing or no one can take you away from Him.

Suicide is the ultimate act of shortening a life, but truthfully all of us may be doing things that would shorten our lives but not quite as dramatically. Someone who smokes a cigarette shortens his or her life by several minutes. If you smoke a pack or a carton, those minutes are adding up. But while you may never smoke and think that you are not destroying yourself, you may not take care of your body and be sedentary. Your body grows weaker and weaker because you do not exercise. Some may shorten their life with peas, cornbread and fried chicken. Many a pastor and a whole bunch of other folks in our churches have enjoyed that self-inflicted shortcut of life. But since it is not as dramatic, we do not think it to be a bad thing. The problem is that it can shorten our lives significantly and we pay little attention to it.

**Suicide does not mean that you are crazy.** Obviously, most people who

take their life are not thinking clearly and for sure they are unable to come up with any meaningful options or other open doors for life. Sometimes people turn from one door to another only to find that every door is locked, the windows are closed, there is no one to talk to and there is no escape route. They are not crazy people so much as they are just people who cannot find anywhere to turn and so they turn to an answer that ends it all. Are they thinking clearly? Obviously, they are not. But probably every one of us has several times each day when clarity is not dominating our thought process.

**Another thing that is not true is that somebody, a mom or dad, brother or sister, teacher or friend let them down.** I have known people who were living in a circle of family and friends who were doing everything they possibly could. They were going not only the second mile but the third and fourth mile in an effort to avoid such a destructive and sad ending. Try as we might, love as we will, give unending encouragement and there comes a point at which we cannot control, shape or determine human behavior.

There are some things that we know without question. We know that if someone knows Jesus however they leave this life they are with Him. We know that if we know that same living Lord Jesus we will see Him, and we will live with those who are with Him. In the darkness of the most difficult days of life, it is still possible to lean on His strong arms for help and say to our caring Christ, "Thanks be to God that giveth us the victory through our Lord, Jesus Christ."

*The author can be contacted at directions@mbcb.org.*

## Speakers' Tournament



The MISSISSIPPI BAPTIST STATE SPEAKERS' TOURNAMENT was held April 27 on the campus of William Carey University.



**AT LEFT:** (Top) Winners of the At-Large Division: Lakelyn Taylor, First Church, Long Beach, 1st place; and Rachael Reeves, Monticello Church, Monticello, 2nd place. (Bottom) Winners and finalists in the Baptist College Division. From left, Leah Bowlin, Poplar Springs Church, Mendenhall, finalist; Brenton Breland, Central Church, McNeil, 3rd place; Molly McCarty, Highland Church, Meridian, 4th place; Tony Daniel, Union Church, Brandon, 1st place; Joel Meek, First Church, Columbus, finalist; and Spencer Remley, First Church, Summit, 2nd place.

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What I tell you in the darkness, speak in the light; and what you hear whispered in your ear, proclaim upon the

# HOUSE TOPS.

Matthew 10:27 NAS

June 6, 2013

HouseTops is a Baptist Record supplement produced by the Mississippi Baptist Convention Board's Communication Services.

## YOUTH NIGHT

# COLLIDE

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**WORSHIP LED BY: MATT PAPA**

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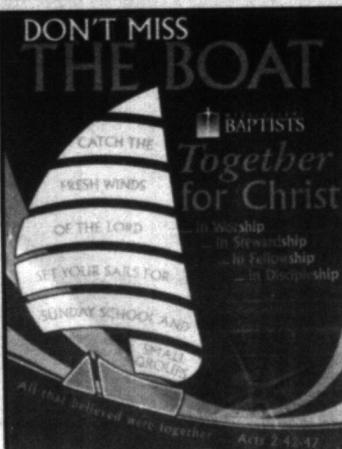
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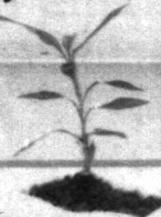
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Pray this day for...

June 7 - June 20, 2013

*"Let everything that has breath praise the Lord!  
Praise the Lord!" Psalm 150:6*

Pray for a team of eight from **FBC, Madison, Camden**, going to the Middle East, June 9-19, for "ESL".

Pray for: **Earl\* and Ramona Hewitt**, missionaries to Sub-Saharan African Peoples in the U.S. through medicine and church/home outreach evangelism.

Pray for a team of 24 from **Good Hope BC, Camden**, going to Haiti, June 16-22, for evangelism & construction.

Pray for: **Don\* & Valery Hulsey**, missionaries ministering to European Peoples in Portugal through church planting, church/home outreach and evangelism.

Pray for: **Raymond\* & Cynthia Hodgins**, missionaries ministering to Deaf Peoples in the U.S. through sports evangelism, church/home outreach evangelism.

Pray for: **Denita\* & Tony\* Inmon**, missionaries to American Peoples in Uruguay through church planting and church/home outreach evangelism.

Pray for: **Jeffrey\* & Liesa\* Holeman**, IMB missionaries ministering to American Peoples in Peru through community outreach, church/home outreach and evangelism.

Pray for: **Floyd\* & Sharon\* Johnston**, missionaries to American Peoples in Brazil through church planting and church/home outreach evangelism.

Pray for: **Janet\* Holloway**, missionary ministering to European Peoples in Peru through community outreach, church/home outreach and evangelism.

Pray for: **Susan\* & Millard Jones**, missionaries to East Asian & European Peoples in Canada through student evangelism.

Pray for: **Brian\* and Felicia\* Henderson**, missionaries to American Peoples in Peru through regional office support and church/home outreach evangelism.

Pray for a team of nine from **Park Place BC, Brandon**, going to Honduras, June 8-15, for VBS.

Pray for: **Claudia\* & Daniel Hood**, missionaries ministering to Sub-Saharan African Peoples in Kenya through church/home outreach and evangelism.

\*These International Mission Board missionaries claim Mississippi as their home state. The IMB missionaries listed in the HouseTops prayer calendar are currently active in 2-4 year terms or in career service.

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JUNE 23, 2013

## Calvinism Advisory Committee

**David S. Dockery** (chairman), president of Union University in Jackson, Tenn.

**Danny Akin**, president of Southeastern Seminary in Wake Forest, N.C.

**David Allen**, dean of the School of Theology at Southwestern Seminary in Fort Worth, Texas.

**Tom Ascol**, pastor of Grace Church, Cape Coral, Fla.

**Mark Dever**, senior pastor of Capitol Hill Church in Washington, D.C.

**Leo Endel**, executive director of the Minnesota-Wisconsin Baptist Convention in Rochester, Minn.

**Ken Fentress**, senior pastor of Montrose Church, Rockville, Md.

**Timothy George**, dean of the Beeson Divinity School at Samford University in Birmingham, Ala.

**Eric Hankins**, senior pastor of First Church in Oxford, Miss.

**Johnny Hunt**, pastor of First Church in Woodstock, Ga., and former two-term SBC president.

**David Landreth**, senior pastor of Long Hollow Church in Hendersonville, Tenn.

**Tammi Ledbetter**, homemaker, journalist, and member of Inglewood Church in Grand Prairie, Texas.

**Steve Lemke**, provost and director of the Baptist Center for Theology and Ministry at New Orleans Seminary.

**Fred Luter**, president of the Southern Baptist Convention and senior pastor of Franklin Avenue Church in New Orleans, La.

**Paige Patterson**, president of Southwestern Seminary, and former two-term SBC president.

**R. Albert Mohler Jr.**, president of Southern Seminary in Louisville, Ky.

**Stephen Rummage**, senior pastor of Bell Shoals Church in Brandon, Fla.

**Daniel Sanchez**, associate dean, professor of missions, and director of the Scarborough Institute of Church Planting & Growth at Southwestern Seminary.

**Jimmy Scroggins**, senior pastor of First Church in West Palm Beach, Fla.

## CALVINISM

*cont. from p. 1*

cooperation in Great Commission ministries.

"We deny that the issues now discussed among us should in any way undermine or hamper our work together if we grant one another liberty and extend to one another charity in these differences. Neither those insisting that Calvinism should dominate Southern Baptist identity nor those who call for its elimination should set the course for our life together."

Southern Baptists, the report says, should "not only acknowledge but celebrate the distinctive contributions made by the multiple streams of our Southern Baptist heritage."

"These streams include both Charleston and Sandy Creek, the Reformers and many of the advocates of the Radical Reformation, confessional evangelicalism and passionate revivalism," it says. "These streams and their tributaries nourish us still."

Both sides of the theological divide, the report says, have extremes that should be rejected.

"We must stand together in rejecting any form of hyper-Calvinism that denies the mandate to present the offer of the Gospel to all sinners or that denies the necessity of a human response to the Gospel that involves the human will. Similarly, we must reject any form of Arminianism that elevates the human will above the divine will or that denies that those who come to faith in Christ are kept by the power of God. How do we know that these positions are to be excluded from our midst? Each includes beliefs that directly deny what The Baptist Faith and Message expressly affirms."

SBC leaders, entities, churches and even prospective ministers all have a role in ensuring that a debate over Calvinism does not divide the denomination, the report says.

"We should expect all leaders in the Southern Baptist Convention and all entities serving our denomination to affirm, to respect, and to represent all Southern Baptists of good faith and to serve the great unity of our Convention," the report says. "No entity should be promoting Calvinism or non-Calvinism to the exclusion of the other. Our entities should be places where any Southern Baptist who stands within the boundaries of The Baptist Faith and Message should be welcomed and affirmed as they have opportunities to benefit from, participate in, and provide leadership for those entities."

"In order to prevent the rising incidence of theological conflict in the churches, we should expect all candidates

for ministry positions in the local church to be fully candid and forthcoming about all matters of faith and doctrine, even as we call upon pulpit and staff search committees to be fully candid and forthcoming about their congregation and its expectations."

"We must do all within our power to avoid the development of partisan divisions among Southern Baptists."

The committee's report calls on Southern Baptists to discuss the subject of Calvinism charitably, and it specifically mentions those on social media.

"We affirm the responsibility of all Southern Baptists to guard our conversation so that we do not speak untruthfully, irresponsibly, harshly, or unkindly to or about any other Southern Baptist. This negativity is especially prevalent in the use of social media, and we encourage the exercise of much greater care in that context," the report says.

"We deny that the main purpose of the Southern Baptist Convention is theological debate. We further deny that theological discussion can be healthy if our primary aim is to win an argument, to triumph in a debate, or to draw every denominational meeting into a conversation over conflicted issues. Of more significance to our life together than any allegiance to Calvinism or non-Calvinism should be our shared identity as Southern Baptists," the report says.

The report further urges Southern Baptists to "grant one another liberty" in those areas "within The Baptist Faith and Message" where "differences in interpretation cause us to disagree." The report then lists a series of areas of disagreement, such as, "[W]e agree that God loves everyone and desires to save everyone, but we differ as to why only some are ultimately saved."

"These differences should spur us to search the Scriptures more dutifully, to engage in lively interaction for mutual sharpening and collective Gospel effectiveness, and to give thanks that what we hold in common far surpasses that on which we disagree," the report says. "But these particular differences do not constitute a sufficient basis for division and must not be allowed to hamper the truly crucial cooperative effort of taking the Gospel to a waiting world. Southern Baptists who stand on either side of these issues should celebrate the freedom to hold their views with passion while granting others the freedom to do the same."

*Editor's Note: The entire report of the Calvinism Advisory Committee can be accessed at <http://sbcchristianpress.org/BPnews.asp?ID=40419>.*

## RELIEF

*cont. from p. 1*

six people each, trained and certified in chainsaw work and debris removal.

At printing deadline for this issue of The Baptist Record, Benton-Tippah Association had committed one team to the St. Louis effort. The Benton-Tippah Association disaster relief unit has just completed a cleanup operation after a levee on a catch pond in DeSoto County failed and flooded about 20 homes, Didlake said.

Southern Baptist Disaster Relief volunteers are active in seven states responding to damage from floods, tornadoes, and other disasters on the eve of hurricane season, according to information compiled by Baptist Press in Nashville.

In addition to the Oklahoma Baptist response and the Mississippi volunteers who are on the scene, Baptist units from Arkansas, California, Iowa, Kansas-Nebraska, Louisiana, Mississippi, Missouri, North Carolina, the Southern Baptists of Texas Convention, Tennessee, and Texas Baptist Men, are participating.

Southern Baptist volunteers also are presently working in Illinois, Indiana, Michigan, Missouri, Texas, and New York on various disaster responses.

"The depth of work disaster relief volunteers are involved in now is astounding, and they continue to serve," said Fritz Wilson, executive director for disaster relief at the North American Mission Board (NAMB) of the Southern Baptist Convention in Alpharetta, Ga.

NAMB coordinates and manages Southern Baptist responses to major disasters through partnerships with 42 state Baptist conventions, most of which have their own disaster relief programs.

Wilson said if rain and flood predictions hold, there might be additional needs for response in Midwest states like Iowa.

Southern Baptists have 82,000 trained volunteers and chaplains and 1,550 mobile units for feeding, chainsaw, mud-out, command, communication, childcare, shower, laundry, water purification, repair/rebuild, and power generation.

Southern Baptists are one of the three largest mobilizers of trained disaster relief volunteers in the United States, along with the American Red Cross and The Salvation Army.

Didlake said financial gifts are being accepted for the multiple disaster relief responses in which Mississippi Baptists are involved. In-kind donations are not being accepted at this time.

Checks should be made payable to MBCB with "Disaster Relief" noted on the memo line, and mailed to Mississippi Baptist Convention Board, Business Office, P.O. Box 530, Jackson, MS 39205-0530. Contributions can also be made online at [http://mccb.org/mission\\_strategy/men/dr/update.aspx#oktornadoes](http://mccb.org/mission_strategy/men/dr/update.aspx#oktornadoes).

*Editor's note: Baptist Press contributed to this article.*

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## God Chooses a People • Genesis 12:1-7; 15:5-8, 13-17

In our first installment of God's Story, we noted how God revealed Himself as Creator, giving Him a status of preeminence over all creation, including people. We also noted how God created people for fellowship and worship. Since God knows what is best for His creation, He alone delineates the blessing ("You may eat from all the trees of the garden.") and delimits the curse ("But from the tree of knowledge of good and evil you shall not eat"). When people violated God's prohibition, they jeopardized His blessings, broke fellowship with Him, and were banished from the garden.

This week's lesson shows God's creativity in bringing people into a right relationship with Him. God takes the initiative to establish a relationship. People must respond to His relational overtures in faith and obedience.

### A Plan of Blessing (Gen. 12:1-3)

A right relationship with God often begins by letting go of some things in our lives we hold dear. This call to let go is important because God insists on being the most significant person in our lives. Other people or things cannot be dearer to us than God if we are to enjoy a right relationship with Him. God asked Abram to leave his country, his relatives, and his father's house (Gen. 12:1; NIV). God promised to take him to a land that He would show

him. Thus, Abram was asked to leave his personal comfort zones and rely on the guiding presence of God Himself as he journeyed toward a new life in a new land.

Along with His promised presence, the Lord also promised Abram He would replace his old country with a "great nation" (12:2). The security Abram surrendered by leaving his relatives would be replaced by God's blessing on Abram and on those who

blessed him. Conversely, anyone who cursed

(from Hebrew *qalal* "to take lightly")

Abram would find themselves

cursed (from Hebrew *arar* "to bind" or "to be unfruitful") by God. God promised to make Abram's name great, a more than adequate compensation for leaving his father's house.

### A Response of Obedience

#### (Gen. 12:4-7)

This brief passage begins with the succinct summary Abram obeyed the LORD, going forth "as the LORD had spoken to

him" (12:4a). The passage ends with a notice that Abram, upon arriving in the land of Canaan, and upon hearing God promise the land to his descendants, built an altar to worship "the LORD who had appeared to him" (12:7). Immediately, we should glean from this passage the connection between obedience and genuine worship. You cannot have true worship without first exercising obedience to God's word. Shechem,

the Hebrew word for "shoulder,"

was built on the "shoulders" of Mt. Ebal and Mt. Gerizim.

Because of Abram's activity there, as well as

Joshua's later (Josh. 24:1, 25, 32), Shechem became an important religious shrine in Israel. Jesus spoke to the Samaritan woman at a well in this region (John 4). Along with Abram, his wife Sarai, his nephew Lot, and several servants made the journey of obedience to the Promised Land.

### A Relationship of Faith

#### (Gen. 15:5-8, 13-17)

Abram was 75 years old when he

obeyed God, journeying to the land of Canaan (12:4b). Later, Abram's aging body and Sarai's advanced years caused him to wonder how God would make of him a great nation. Abram wondered if his house slave, Eliezer of Damascus, would be his heir (15:2-3). God reassured him; Abram would father the promised child (15:4). Then God provided a special illustration; He told Abram to look at the night sky, salted with millions of stars. If Abram could count those stars, he would be able to number his descendants (15:5).

Abram's response constitutes one of the greatest verses in Scripture (15:6a). Abram believed (literally "amen-ed") the LORD. He did not know how or when God would fulfill His promise, but he took God at His word, trusting Him to make good on the promise. As a result the Lord credited Abram as being a righteous person in correct relationship with Him (15:6b).

God told Abram his descendants would become a nation of slaves for 400 years (15:13) and that He would deliver them (15:14). Abram would live to old age and die in peace (15:15). Finally, God promised Abram's descendants would return to the land (15:16). Thus, Abram set an example for us. We must live by faith as we obediently follow God's plan for our lives.

*VanHorn is Dean of the Mississippi College School of Christian Studies and the Arts.*

## Was It My Fault? • Job 4:6-7; 6:2-3, 24; 8:4-8; 11:6b, 13-15; 13:4, 22-25

When Job's three friends, Eliphaz (translated God Dispenses Judgment), Bildad (Son of Contention), and Zophar (Rough or Chirper), heard about the troubles that Job had experienced, they agreed to go together to see him to sympathize with him and comfort him. As they saw him off in the distance, they were not prepared for what they saw. Hardly recognizing him, they wept, tore their robes, and sprinkled dust on their heads acknowledging their grief. In sympathy for his great suffering, they sat on the ground with him for seven days and nights without a word.

Finally, Job spoke. It was fitting for him to speak first, to express his reaction to his suffering. He cursed the day that he was born, desiring that he had not been born or had died at birth. This was not the voice of faith speaking or of Job's character, but was the expression of great pain. Job had lost his peace and serenity of life to turmoil, but he never denied God.

God uses hardships in five ways as revealed in the Book of Job and reflected in Deuteronomy 8: (1) to humble us, (2) to test us, (3) to rearrange our priorities, (4) to discipline us, and (5) to prepare us for future blessings. Job's trials brought about an important transformation in him and enabled him to experience God's gracious and abundant blessings.

The greater part of the book is devoted to the debates between Job and his three friends and, later, Elihu, also. They were his "comforters" even though they were totally wrong in their understanding of suffering. Of all who knew Job, they were the ones who came to see him, they mourned with him seven days, and they confronted him to his face.

Eliphaz the Temanite is the first to respond to Job's lament. He speaks from the background of theology relying on his experience and observation in admonishing Job with the voice of a philosopher. His concept of God is that He is righteous and punishes the wicked and blesses the good. Eliphaz speaks out of a vision from God, but the message he conveys is not characteristic of God. Eliphaz considerably acknowledges that Job has instructed and encouraged many others who were having trouble. Using this commendation as a springboard, he begins chiding Job and calling him a religious hypocrite for hold-

ing on to his integrity when it is obvious that he is guilty of great sin as evidenced by his intense suffering (4:8). Beginning in 5:8, Eliphaz urged Job to turn to God, again implying that Job had turned away from God. To Job, this is the most preposterous thing he has ever heard. God does not kill your children if you sin. Where is God in all this?

In seeking application in our lives, we must recognize the inaccuracy of classifying all adversity as

the result of God's justice or judgment.

The next friend to speak to Job is Bildad the Shuhite, a historian and legalist from a background of tradition and the law, who approaches Job from a historical perspective (8:8). His concept of God is that of Judge, immovable lawgiver. He has an argumentative personality and puts the blame for Job's adversity on the premise that the wicked always suffer. Bildad believed God could not be wrong, so Job must have sinned. Therefore, since

Job was suffering terribly, his sin must have been an atrocity and his affliction is the consequence of it.

In daily living, applying traditionally accepted explanations to every case of human suffering usually leads to the making of false judgmental assumptions.

A moralist and dogmatist, Job's third friend Zophar is rude and blunt and judges him on assumption and speaks with a voice of orthodoxy. His argument to Job is that he must be sinning because the wicked always suffer. In 11:6b, Zophar implies that Job's situation would be even worse had God not already forgiven some of his sin. He simply assumes wrongly that Job is a great sinner and, therefore, needs to repent.

Job answers that his eyes have seen and his ears have heard and understood, but all of their defenses are defenses of clay. He rejected the inaccurate explanations and counsel of his friends. He knew he had not sinned against God. He faced a time in life when human advice no longer helped; only God could help. Job anticipated pardon from all sin and life beyond the grave.

*Duncan is a member of First Church, Starkville.*

## Revivals & Homecomings

► **Christ Church, Greenwood:** 28th annual homecoming, June 9; Sunday School,

10 a.m.; worship, 11 a.m., followed by potluck lunch and singing, fellowship, and activi-

ties and games for children; Laney Haley, speaker; Brian Creely, music.

► **Bowlin Church, Sallis Community:** Homecoming, June 9, 11 a.m.; Dwayne Cole,

speaker.

► **Unity Church, Moselle:** Homecoming, June 9; Sunday School, 9:30 a.m.; worship, 10:30 a.m., followed by dinner on the grounds, singing, and installa-

tion of pastor Garry Edwards.

► **Rocky Mount Church, Calhoun:** Homecoming, June 9, 10:30 a.m.; Larry W. Haggard, pastor and speaker; Roy Gregory, music.

## Just for the Record



**NESHOBIA CHURCH, UNION**, ordained Matthew Collins to the ministry. Shown are pastor (and grandmother) Johnny Collins and Collins.



**FIRST CHURCH, CALHOUN CITY**, recently held a child dedication service. Shown are Megan McCormick with son Aiden and Jessica Alderman with son Jack. Mike Smith, pastor.



**FIRST CHURCH, PICAYUNE**, will honor organist Betty Polk for 50 years of service to the church June 9. County-wide hymn festival, 4 p.m., featuring music from composer Benjamin Harlan. Patrick Scott, one of her former students, guest organist. Additional instrumentalists from the University of Southern Mississippi will join the Hymn Festival Choir. Festival followed by a reception.

OUR



The children of **BEULAH CHURCH, DECATUR**, presented a musical entitled The Ultimate Question, under the direction of Courtney Lanier.



The RAs and leaders of **IMMANUEL CHURCH, GREEN-WOOD**, attended the RA Camporee at Central Hills May 3.

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### NEW POLICY FOR PHOTO SUBMISSIONS

Effective with the July 11, 2013 issue of The Baptist Record, all photographs submitted for publication in the newspaper must be sent via e-mail as a jpeg attachment (.jpg). Because of the cost and inconvenience of submitting a printed photograph (which involves taking a digital photograph, having it processed and printed, and the cost of postage involved in mailing), we are making this change to help both the sender and The Baptist Record to be good stewards. Photos can be submitted to The Baptist Record via e-mail at no cost, as opposed to the costs noted above. Thank you for your understanding and cooperation.

### Submission Guidelines

The Baptist Record is pleased to publish news and photographs of special events that take place in cooperating churches of the Mississippi Baptist Convention.

News submitted for publication in The Baptist Record must be either (a) typewritten, (b) neatly printed on 8 1/2 by 11-inch paper, or (c) neatly printed on standardized forms provided by the newspaper. All articles must be received in writing; no articles will be accepted over the telephone.

News may be submitted electronically to the address below, and must be contained in the message segment of an e-mail form. Due to increasing virus threats, no text attachments will be accepted. Photograph attachments are permissible.

Please make articles concise. Include the who, what, when, where details of the story, along with a contact person's address and telephone number.

Photographs may be color or black and white. Instant photos and digital printouts are

not reproducible. Digital photos may be used if submitted as a JPEG file via either e-mail, CD or DVD. Photos must be clear, sharp, and well-lit. Cell phone photographs and other low resolution items are generally not publishable. Photographs can not be returned. Please do not attach photos with tape or staples.

All news items are subject to editing, and all photographs are subject to cropping. Photographs must depict people. No landscape-building, or object-only photographs will be printed. News items and/or photographs can be published one time only. News items and/or photographs depicting benefits and activities for secular or outside organizations will not be published. Deadline for submitting news is one week prior to requested publication date.

Articles that are not date-sensitive will be published on a space-available basis.

Submit news and photographs to The Baptist Record, P.O. Box 530, Jackson, MS 39205-0530. FAX: (601) 292-3330. E-mail: baptistrecord@mbcb.org.

## Need a light?

Jesus said, "I am the light of the world. Whoever follows me will not walk in darkness but will have the light of life." (John 8:12)

Simply share the following prayer with God in your own words:

1. Lord, I admit that I need you. (I have sinned.)
2. I want forgiveness for my sins and freedom from eternal death. (I repent.)
3. I believe Jesus died and rose from the grave to forgive my sins and to restore my relationship with you. (I believe in Jesus.)
4. By faith, I invite Jesus Christ into my life. From this time on, I want to live in a loving relationship with Him. (I receive Christ as my Savior and Lord.)

"But as many as received him, to them he gave the right to become children of God, even to those who believe in his name." (John 1:12)

If you make a decision for Christ today, contact a local Southern Baptist church for spiritual guidance.